

# REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

— PLUS —

- Iran: tasks of communists
- Decadence and Materialism
- Lenin's Political Thought
- The Italian Left



## CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

Cover: the Bolsheviks win over soldiers to communism,  
Russia 1917

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# PERSPECTIVES:

## The Capitalist Impasse and War Preparations



(Financial Times 2.3.83). 1982 was the worst year for world trade for 35 years, according to GATT's annual report: it fell 6% by value (Guardian 6.9.82). Marx remarked that the crisis makes the ruling class intelligent, and its more astute members, unlike many so-called "Marxists", are able to see the cause of the crisis:

"For reasons that remain unclear, the productivity of capital has shown a marked decline over the last two decades.... taking the six of the largest OECD countries, ratios of return in manufacturing fell from 20 to 13 per cent from 1973 to 1981." (OECD Observer 123 p.30)

### INTRODUCTION.

The production of Perspectives to guide the work of a revolutionary group is a vital task if it is to avoid mere empiricism and tail-ending of events in its political tasks. Guidelines for the definition of areas of importance for our work, provision of material and analyses for our propaganda, the development of productions in order to guide our interventions, all these can only come from a coherent set of perspectives.

Since our last published Perspectives text, in R.P.19, appeared 18 months ago, both the economic crisis and imperialist rivalries have markedly worsened. In this context it was the task of the CWO to evaluate:

1. what actual stage is the crisis at?
2. how close are we to world war?
3. where is the class struggle going?

The draft Perspectives were the object of intense discussion inside the organisation, both at our annual meeting in the Spring of 1983 and later. We are now able to produce a homogenised text, which avoids both complacency (the comfortable illusion that imperialist war is a distant abstraction, and economic collapse a philosophical issue) and any tendency towards panic and despair (capitalist economic collapse and imperialist barbarism is round the corner and the proletariat remains passive).

We hope these Perspectives will stimulate a response in the wider proletarian milieu, and amongst our readership, both of whom are invited to contribute to a discussion that by its nature remains permanently open.

Editors R.P. Nov. '83

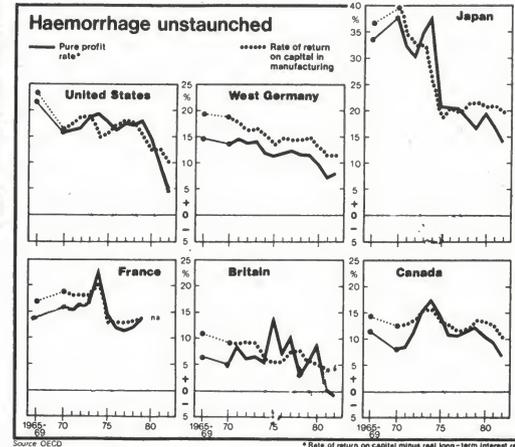
### The Economy

1. With the exception of the decade after 1929, the last 10 years have been the worst in capitalism's history, and in particular 1982 was the worst year year for the capitalist economy since the beginning of the present economic crisis. It has been the only year in the present economic cycle (excepting the post oil rise year of 1974) when industrial production fell worldwide.

OECD Countries Growth (Averages) (from OECD OBSERVER Jan 1983)

	1970-80	1981	1982
G.N.P.	3.2%	0.2%	-0.5%
Industrial Production	3.0%	0.7%	-3.5%

Worldwide industrial production has fallen to the levels of 1973, while in Britain it has fallen to that of 1967



At the root of the crisis is capitalism's inability to produce profitably, the falling rate of profit, which Marx described as "the most important law of political economy".

2. Neither Keynesian policies of deficit financing nor monetarist cutbacks in the money supply have halted the march of the crisis. In France Mitterand's expansionary fiscal policies have quickly given way to an austerity programme with the aim of reducing the public debt which the government had deliberately increased in 1982. This confirms what we said in RP 19 that

"...Mitterand's policies are taking place at a time when the crisis is so severe that they are not leading to any, even temporary, upturns in the economy." (page 4)

On the other hand, Thatcher's monetarist policies in Britain involve huge cutbacks in public spending but, far from leading to economic recovery for British capitalism, have led to further industrial stagnation. Recent reduction in the rate of inflation has been bought at the cost of almost 4 million unemployed, unprecedented levels of factory closures, a fall in annual GNP (1980... -1.8; 1981... -2; 1982... -6) and a general failure of capitalists to invest in new machinery and plant (growth in gross fixed capital formation for 1979... 1.4; 1980... 0.7; 1981... -6.5). Bourgeois economists are unable to put forward a solution; their predictions of upturns are no more than wishful thinking. As the French Institute for International Relations reported in its State of the World Economy for 1982, (RAMSES)

"This year's annual reports from the main international organisations - GATT, World Bank, IMF, and the OECD - leave the reader with a sense of frustration, resulting not only from their failure to suggest new ways out of the crisis, but from a feeling that these institutions are losing their confidence and their sense of identity. ... For the industrial countries, the OECD is predicting a recovery for the following eighteen months." (p.18)

We can now add that this was the eighth consecutive time when such predictions were proved to be wrong.

3. The continuing capitalist crisis and declining profit rates means that capitalists are being forced to "rationalise" production (i.e. close down branches and certain factories) in order to reduce production costs and increase productivity. For the working class mass unemployment, wage cuts and increased exploitation are the outcome.

Official unemployment in the OECD countries:

Unemployment %	1981	1982	1983 (estimate)
%	7.1	8.5	9.5
Nos.	24.7m	30½m	33.75m

and "unemployment in Europe is expected to grow by nearly 1 million every six months" till 1985 (OECD Observer). To liquidate its army of unemployed of 2½ millions West Germany would require a growth rate of 6% for the next 12 years (Guardian 8.3.83) - a rate not achieved in any year since the 1960s. In the context of the enormity of the problem the projected OECD rise in GNP of 1% world wide is a mere drop in the ocean. The ruling class itself sees the scale of the problem. According to the OECD Observer No 124, "20,000 extra jobs will be required every day during the last five years of the decade if OECD unemployment is to be cut back to its 1979 level of 19 million." (page 15) This vast reserve army of labour is a growing and permanent feature of this stage of the crisis. As we said last year, "the only way unemployment can be mopped up is under conditions of open preparation for war by the militarisation of society". (RP 19 page 4)

4. The bosses have made much in 1983 of the supposed US economic recovery which will lead the world economy to the promised land. In fact the US micro-boom was fuelled by Reagan's monetary expansion - 5% in 1981, 8.5% in 1982 and 13.7% in 1983, which has led to a record US budget deficit of 200 billion dollars and is building up pressures for an inflationary explosion as sure as night follows day. And even this mini-expansion is not a signal for worldwide expansion. On the contrary, US monetary expansion leads to high interest rates, which, since 55% of world trade and 80% of world loans are in dollars, actually worsens the economic plight of the rest of the US bloc.

Even the US micro-boom "has now petered out" (Financial Times 16.9.83), and the critical state of US capitalism is shown by the fact that industrial companies now use 42% of their income to service their borrowing, whereas in the 1960s it was 13½%. As the bourgeois Economist World Economy Survey (24.9.83) - from which the above figures come - said, "In short, the conditions for a lasting recovery do not exist." (p.64)

5. The situation in the underdeveloped areas of the globe is catastrophic. Their level of indebtedness to the imperialist countries has rocketed:

Third World Debt (\$ bn)

1971 - 86.6; 1979 - 397.3; 1981 - 524; 1982 - 626. (Figures from World View 1983, ex 1982 (OECD OUTLOOK))

Service charges on the debts have steadily risen with the rise in interest rates to an average 20% export earnings (60% in the case of Brazil). The failure of development plans, and the collapse of commodity prices (in real terms they fell by 12% from the first quarter of 1981 to the first quarter of 1982), means that the situation is stark. Where famine does not already stalk (Sahel, Ethiopia, Bangladesh) the prospect of economic collapse and the collapse of development illusions is haunting the local bourgeoisie. The myth of "national development" and "national independence" is being exploded by the economic crisis. The only liberation from the misery of imperialism is the world-wide socialist revolution.

6. The situation in COMECON is also deteriorating steadily. Dreams of western-financed breakthroughs onto the world market have collapsed in Poland (\$27bn debt) and Rumania (\$10bn debt), and both countries have had to restructure their loans, without avoiding the threat of default. Countries which have avoided the debt trap have stagnated economically (e.g. Czechoslovakia's debts are a mere \$3.6bn; growth in 1981 was 0.2%). Many countries of the COMECON bloc now include unemployment (Poland 600,000) and inflation (Hungary 4.6% in 1981) in their economic performances.

In Russia itself capital investment has been declining since the 1970s but the 11th Five Year Plan (1981-85) is the first time that the government has actually planned a reduction in the percentage of national income invested in capital equipment (the planned rate of growth of fixed capital is 5.4%, compared to 7% in the 10th Plan). The Eleventh Plan's estimated growth of 4% in GNP rests on "intensification" - i.e. the more intense use of labour and machinery, or variable and constant capital. In practice this means intensification of exploitation while investment is slowed down. According to RAMSES 1982,

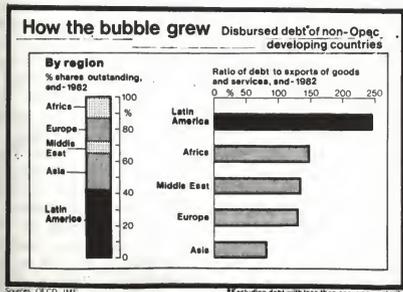
"So vital is the role of gains in labour and productivity, in fact, that they are supposed to account for 90% of the five-year increment in industrial output, and the entirety of growth in agriculture and construction." (op.cit. pp223-4)

As well as the enormous burdens such a plan places on the working class, it also shows how the state capitalist bloc is also plagued by the absence of enough surplus value to reinvest in new constant capital. The relative backwardness of Russia's agriculture and industrial infra-structure is illustrated by the fact that Russia still has to rely on the West for grain and its lower organic composition of capital means, for example, that the use of energy as a proportion of GNP is nearly twice that of Europe. While overall COMECON indebtedness to the West has risen from \$6.7 bn in 1974 to \$45bn in 1980, the bloc is still bedevilled by slow growth rates. According to the same RAMSES report:

"If productivity growth continues downwards as it did during the 1970s, the Soviet economy may only grow at 2 per cent a year during the Eleventh Plan."

As the crisis worsens the anti-working class nature of the regimes in Eastern Europe will be ever more clearly revealed, as will the necessity of their overthrow by the proletariat.

7. The expansion of credit, at home and abroad, in order to stave off the collapse of the capitalist economy, is reaching its ceiling. The international credit mechanism is strained to breaking point. For the first time in its history, the IMF suspended all further loans in September 1983 for two months, as it was itself virtually bankrupt! According to the Financial Times (18.2.83) total world debt in 1981 was \$735bn, while the equity capital of the world's top 100 banks is a mere \$60 bn. The debt/service ratio of the less developed countries, which account for about 70% of this debt, worsened from 1976 to 1982. While their debts roughly tripled, their ability to pay interest only doubled. In the words of the Financial Times, "Bankers are fiddling while the banking edifice threatens to burn".



At the same time as the OPEC "oil surplus" has assumed increasing importance as a source of finance for international loans (e.g. Saudi Arabia was the IMF's largest creditor in 1981) that surplus itself has declined (from \$118 bn in 1980 to \$64 bn in 1981). Moreover, outside of the Middle East oil states oil production in the dependent areas of the world has been the basis for running up huge debts, resulting in these states being amongst the largest debtors. 31% of developing countries' debts are owed by 8 oil producing countries.

Already hit by the decline in commodity prices, debtors are now hit by falling inflation, since debts are no longer being repudiated:

<u>Inflation in OECD Countries (from OECD Observer)</u>		
1970-80	1981	1982
8.2% (average)	9.4	7.5

The recent collapse in oil prices from \$34 a barrel to (in the apparent collapse of OPEC) a free for all where oil is selling at from \$27 - 29 a barrel, will mean that some of the heaviest debtors like Mexico, Venezuela and Indonesia will have difficulty in avoiding default. It is impossible to predict how long the existing financial institutions established by imperialism after the 2nd World War can continue to bail out bankrupt states. What is certain is that, with a dwindling world stock of surplus value, they cannot do so indefinitely. The prospect of one or more debtor states being officially declared bankrupt and descending into economic chaos is now a real possibility. Such an event could trigger off the collapse of the international financial institutions themselves. In fact, the bourgeoisies of the weakest countries (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina) are considering a "concerted default" as a realistic option. In the meantime international deficit financing and redistribution of surplus value through loans and rescheduling of debts continue to have the effect of prolonging and deepening the crisis whilst equalling out stagnation in the capitalist monopolies. Today the world economy displays many features of the pre-war years of the Thirties - zero growth rates, lack of industrial development, under-utilisation of plant, mass unemployment and declining commodity prices. The inexorable deepening of the crisis is driving capitalism ever closer to its final solution - the devaluation of capital through world war as a means for a renewed accumulation cycle.

## The Proletariat in the Face of the Crisis

8. The last few years have witnessed a decline in working class struggle (with the exception of the Polish events), a decline which we pointed out in our last two Perspectives documents. In the early years of the crisis the proletariat responded to declining rates of wage increases with a series of strikes, often class-wide which began outside of the control of the trade unions. (1968-74 in France, Italy, U.K., Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia.) However, even those strikes which were not limited at the outset by strictly economic demands did not challenge the state since they had no proletarian leadership and they were not guided by a clear political programme. In the West these struggles were crushed when they were taken over by the trade unions and left-wing capitalist parties (Socialist, Communist) and diverted to limited economic demands. In the East the workers' struggle became subsumed under nationalism. More than ten years of trade union involvement in negotiating redundancies, speed-ups and persuading workers to accept wage cuts have reduced the unions' credibility as defenders of the working class. At the same time the Socialist and Communist Parties' failure to produce an alternative to austerity and belt-tightening in the interests of the national economy has left a political vacuum within the working class and has thus opened up the possibility for communist work. The sense of "realism" by which the bourgeoisie interprets the present relative passivity of the working class is a sign that the class sees no way forward within the present system but at the same time there is a reluctance to challenge this system without a clear political alternative before them.

9. In Poland the class struggle has suffered a setback. Though a sporadic rearguard action is being fought, the struggle is now localised and sectionalised. Originally an inspiration to the international working class, the incipient working class support expressed in strikes of car workers in Turin and Scotland and miners in the US was over-shadowed by the bourgeoisie's campaign in support of Solidarity and the liberal democratic political fractions in Poland. Workers in the Eastern bloc are now experiencing the true class nature of 'free' trade unionism through Solidarity's nationalism and calls for moderation in the face of the crisis in the national economy. The defeat of this latest round of class struggle in Poland by Solidarity means that communist work in the Eastern bloc is now posed in the same terms as in the West - i.e. the need for a class-wide fight outside of the trade unions.

10. The class struggle in the capitalist heartlands reached a new low in 1981-2. The European and US proletariat continued to struggle in a limited and sectional manner. In Britain in particular, the nurses' and hospital workers' strikes did not succeed in gaining mass working class support. The working class either saw no alternative to making sacrifices in the interests of capitalism to try and save jobs (e.g. Vauxhall and BL workers' acceptance of wage rises below inflation or Hyster and Perkins' workers accepting direct pay cuts) or the unions successfully prevented a united response to further redundancies (as at BSC recently where craft workers struck unofficially against the main steel union's failure to fight redundancies but where ISTC members did not support the strike).

However, the erosion of living standards, as well as of illusions of a capitalist recovery, is preparing the ground for a revival of class struggle. It is significant that 1983 saw strikes by workers at Vauxhall and Perkins Diesel - workers who had accepted wage cuts in 1982 without a fight. And the magnificent fight of the oil-rig workers at Nigg in September 1983 was an inspiration to the whole working class. Workers at Dunlop and in the shipyards are risking the loss of redundancy pay by taking a stand against job losses. But the distance to be covered is shown at Scott-Lithgow on the Clyde where workers unanimously threw out a management "survival plan" on the shop stewards' recommendation and then endorsed a "rival" plan produced by the shop stewards, described by the press and management as "virtually identical". Here, as in the Nigg dispute, the stewards used the workers' anger and militancy to force the bosses to allow the unions to "participate" in negotiations of working conditions for the class.

11. Outside of capitalism's metropolises social movements with a proletarian admixture continue, specifically in Iran and Iraq under the impact of the Gulf War despite the failure of the weak communist forces in the area to oppose the war on a class basis. The most positive sign in recent months has been the re-emergence of mass strikes in Latin America. In Chile the workers have struck heroically against the butcher Pinochet, while in Brazil hundreds of thousands have taken action against IMF-imposed austerity measures, by strikes, looting, etc. When to this is added the long and bitter struggle of the Indian textile workers it is clear that the class struggle in the peripheral areas is regaining the level of the 1979-80 period (when there were mass strikes in Brazil, Korean insurrection, struggles in South Africa and the events in Iran). The prospect of default in these areas could provoke social movements of the "Iranian type" - i.e. social convulsions grouping varied strata of exploited and oppressed masses, sharpening class antagonisms and imperialist rivalries. Here the task of communists is to put forwards a clear revolutionary programme within the working class in order to lead the class struggle forward and to win over the semi-proletarians and oppressed masses from all forms of national democratic alternatives. At the same time, in capitalism's most marginal areas we should expect to see increasing manifestations of capitalist barbarism as the crisis reaches horrific depths (e.g. the summary expulsion of thousands of Ghanaian workers from Nigeria as the government there tried to find its solution to

the growing crisis and sudden drop in oil revenues, and the government-sponsored massacre of Tamil workers in Sri Lanka).

## Imperialism and War Preparations

12. Since the Second World War the relations between the two imperialist blocs have passed from the Cold War, through detente, to the present period which has been appropriately termed the "hot peace". In the early part of the crisis detente was an attempt to deal with it by cutting unproductive arms spending. After the Vietnam War the proportion of the US federal budget going to military spending fell from 15% in 1970 to 5.4% in 1980. The past two years have seen the reversal of this trend. In 1981 military expenditure was \$162 bn while in 1982 Congress voted the highest ever military budget in monetary terms (\$206.9 bn). Today's increases in US arms expenditure must be seen in the context of declining economic growth and a general increase in arms expenditure by the NATO countries (3% per year) as well as a real annual increase in USSR military spending. (Western estimates of Russian military spending as a percentage of GNP vary from 12 to 18% for 1980 while another report calculates that if present expenditure continues, "military procurement will absorb more than half the output of the machine-building and metalworking sectors between 1985 and 1990" - from Bond and Levine, RAMSES.) Re-armament is underway and forthcoming years will see increasing moves towards the militarisation of the economy and society.

13. At the same time as re-arming the two great powers who control today's imperialist blocs - Russia and America - are continuing to manoeuvre against each other to try and establish as favourable a strategic position as possible in the run-up to war. Stemming from Russia's economic weakness vis-à-vis the US (as a result of its lower organic composition of capital) Russian imperialism is the weaker of the two great powers. In our previous Perspectives texts we surveyed how the balance of forces was swinging against Russia worldwide, with the threat of encirclement and weakening of her bloc. Since then things have improved for the USSR. Poland has been pacified without Russian military intervention and has started to meet its deliveries to COMECON partners again (especially coal). Even Romania's flirtation with the West has run out of steam with its threatened default and the loss of trading privileges with the US, leading it back to Moscow's camp and to support Russian calls for West European arms reductions. In Afghanistan the situation marks time, validating what we said in RP 16 that the opposition to the Karmal regime would not be able to "Vietnamese" Russian imperialism. Globally Russia has strengthened its military presence with a base in the Kurile Islands (north of Japan) in direct connection with recent Japanese re-armament and a base in Vietnam (Camranh Bay) to establish a military presence in the South China Sea. But Russia's main gain since the coming to power of Andropov has been the reduction of tension with China and the latter's retreat from the recent close relations with the US as it attempts to do a balancing act between the two great powers. At present the threat of an Asian flank in World War Three has receded for Russia. Thus, while still the weaker of the two great imperialist powers, the decline in Russia's position has been arrested and her bloc homogenised to some extent. In 1983 Russia also re-emerged as a power in the Middle East, through its Syrian and other allies presenting an obstacle to the spread of Pax Americana in the Lebanon. Reagan's support for the Israeli occupation and the Maronite elite followed by open intervention by US marines to support Gemayel has led to an anti-US constellation which at the moment favours the USSR. Russia hopes to see the Lebanon bleed US imperialism white and to drive "neutral" Arab states towards the Soviet camp.

14. For US imperialism set-backs over the last period have roughly matched the gains. With the drift of China back towards an attempted balancing act between the blocs has also come the threat of a "backyard Vietnam" as US

policy shifts back to open military involvement in dependent areas where it sees a threat to its interests (e.g. Grenada, El Salvador, Nicaragua). Military requirements in Central America could limit the hand of US imperialism elsewhere.

On the other hand, gains have been made with the agreement to extend the life of NATO bases in Greece, with the entry of Spain into NATO and the progress in the re-arming of Japan. Japan is now the world's 6th military power (in terms of military spending per head of population) and is now responsible for its own defence 1,000 sea miles from its coast. It also has to bear a larger part of the costs in order to allow the US to increase its military aid elsewhere. The main success for US imperialism has been the election of Kohl's CDU in West Germany, symbolising the wish of the German bourgeoisie to fall in behind US military plans (i.e. Cruise missile deployment). With the re-election of a Conservative government in the UK, in France a more pro-US government and Italy's enthusiastic support of NATO (as shown, for example, by its sending of troops to the Lebanon), Russia's dreams of the "Finlandisation" of Europe and its neutrality in World War Three have come to an end. Though they may experiment, in Balkan or Baltic nuclear free zones, the USSR now knows that Germany, France, Britain and Italy will be militarily involved in World War Three. It is true that economic conflicts remain between the members of the US bloc (eg West German trade links with COMECON), but none are significant enough to disrupt the trend, as in the Eastern bloc, towards bloc homogenisation.

15. In this respect the Falklands war represents not a sign of disintegration within the US bloc, but a pre-world war skirmish whose breaking out has revealed the depth of the economic crisis. The war provided both the British and Argentinian bourgeoisie with the opportunity to divert attention from the economic crisis and to increase their nationalist propaganda.

The absence of opposition from the British bourgeoisie to IMF aid to Argentina to prop up Argentinian capital and the military junta shows that the war has not led to the internal weakening of the US bloc. On the other hand, Western imperialism used the war to test weapons and troops in a real battle situation.

The Falklands War, though less costly than other imperialist battlegrounds which exist today, is thus a significant step on imperialism's road to World War Three.

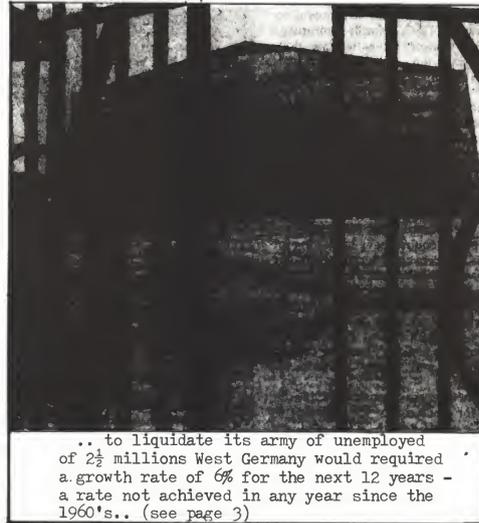
And the ever-open sore of the Gulf War between Iran and Iraq remains a potential source of a wider war, despite the attitude of those "internationalists" who wish to ignore its existence. The despatch of increased western aid to Iraq (French Ententards) to forestall a defection to the Russian bloc and avert Iraqi defeat adds a new twist to the twisting sands of the imperialist constellations in the region.

16. The dire situation of the world economy and the heightened military preparations for war all confirm what we said at our last Congress that, "...the situation is rapidly destabilising and the 1980s will be a pre-war decade". Just as in many ways the situation of the world economy shows parallels with the Thirties, so the process of re-arming, the preparations for a "conventional", non-nuclear war at the same time as the existence of a "peace movement" within the ranks of the bourgeoisie, point to the imminence of war. As the crisis reaches its depths we can expect to see imperialism's wars move closer towards capital's heartlands. The Korean airline disaster served as an ideal occasion for the belligerence of both blocs, and a preparation for the "failure" of the Geneva arms limitations talks, which themselves are simply propaganda for re-armament.

## Conclusions and Tasks for the Organisation

17. Over the last ten years the crisis has spread and deepened in the way we predicted. In capitalism's heartlands the working class has experienced an unprecedented drop in living standards and the highest unemployment since the Thirties. However, the spontaneist scenario

- of a roughly parallel growth in the crisis, class struggle and revolutionary minorities - has been shown to be mistaken.



.. to liquidate its army of unemployed of 2½ millions West Germany would require a growth rate of 6% for the next 12 years - a rate not achieved in any year since the 1960's.. (see page 3)

18. Rather than leading to more and more generalised outbursts of independent class struggle, more than ten years of increased austerity, ever-harsher working conditions and the seeming powerlessness to prevent lay-offs, has led the working class to its present state of relative passivity. The world-wide revival of class activity still remains below the level of earlier years in the crisis.

19. Within the working class there is widespread scepticism. On the one hand the capitalists' promises of the upturn just round the corner in return for sacrifices are now no longer believed. On the other, the patent inability of the trade unions and left-wing capitalist parties - who in fact are the representatives of capital in the ranks of the working class - to defend workers in the daily struggle has left the class disoriented but, as yet, without a course of action of its own.

20. The history of the class struggle since the end of the post-war boom and the return of capital's cyclical crisis has given the lie to the philosophers of spontaneism. The class struggle has for the most part remained trapped in the confines of trade unionism and has been crushed by it. Even where strikes have begun outside of the trade union framework they have tended to remain sectional and have eventually been defeated by trade union policies (e.g. the Amsterdam dockers). The Polish workers' struggle which initially took place on an independent terrain and which spread to incorporate the bulk of the Polish working class, was defeated at the hands of Solidarity's nationalist trade union policies. This defeat has been held up by the world bourgeoisie as an example to the working class of the futility of struggle. For us the Polish experience only confirms the experience of the whole working class: both its fighting potential and at the same time the crucial absence of an organised revolutionary presence within the working class to lead that fight and put forward the communist programme.

21. The historic legacy of the defeat of the Russian Revolution and the parties of the Third International joining the counter-revolution remains with us - above all in the weakness of revolutionary minorities and their inability to influence significantly the class struggle from within. Although today's revolutionaries are clearer than at the outset of the crisis about the lessons of previous struggles and the tasks of

communists, the central problem for the fate of the class struggle remains the absence of an organised revolutionary force in the daily class struggle. Our basic task, therefore, is to strengthen our forces with the aim of extending our influence within the working class.

22. Without a significant revolutionary presence in the daily class struggle, workers' disillusion with existing leaders and methods of struggle has left them without a clear way forward. However, despite the present paralysis, the crisis forces the working class to look for a solution. It is our task to explain the revolutionary alternative to the working class as a whole. Thus, as well as our theoretical journal, the publication of a regular popular paper with a clear analysis of current political events and the class struggle remains a priority.

23. As far as we are able, revolutionaries must be prepared to relate to and intervene in struggles as they occur. Thus the creation of revolutionary groups within the factories remains our objective as part of our strategy to undermine bourgeois influence inside the class and establish a link between the revolutionary party and the revolutionary class.

24. The framework of our general propaganda, our factory work and our work amongst the unemployed is the fact that today is a pre-war period and the fact that the working class alone is capable of providing a realistic alternative to capitalism's eventual solution to the crisis - imperialist world war.

25. Within this framework we must continue to stress the need for the working class:

- a. to refuse to accept sacrifices in the national interest;
- b. to fight outside of the trade unions and the existing political parties;
- c. to unify its struggles across sectional boundaries, e.g. between the employed and unemployed;
- d. to recognise the necessity of establishing an international revolutionary party.

The daily struggle of the working class to defend itself against the austerity measures and sacrifices imposed by the bourgeoisie remains the only basis for the development of the revolutionary struggle against the capitalist state itself. In the present period it is also the basis for the emergence of revolutionary defeatism against one's own government - the only way the working class can continue to fight for its own interests in the event of war breaking out.

26. For capitalism, world war is both a solution to the crisis and at the same time the most advanced stage of the crisis. For communists to argue that the outbreak of war signals the defeat of the proletariat is a denial of the necessity to organise for the revolution in capitalist war as well as during capitalism's "peace". This is the worst form of capitulation to the bourgeoisie, and objectively demobilises the class for the bourgeoisie.

Both before and during imperialist war our task is to organise for the defence of the independent and international interests of the working class. This is so whether the war be a pre-world war skirmish or practice round (à la Falklands); an all-out fight between states where the working class is dragged into the capitalist war machine (as in the Iran/Iraq war); or the Third World War itself. At all times the call for the proletariat to refuse to make sacrifices for the interests of the national capital is central to our work. Failure to follow a revolutionary defeatist policy in the conditions of imperialist war is abandoning the struggle for socialism and is at best petty bourgeois centrist pacifism, at worst open social chauvinism.

# THE SITUATION IN IRAN AND THE TASKS OF COMMUNISTS

## 1. Kurdistan and the United Front

### The Problem:

#### Formation of a Vanguard in the Periphery

Since the outbreak of the capitalist economic crisis at the end of the 1960s, one of the most noticeable features has been the series of explosions in the partially-developed periphery of capitalist countries. Areas where a certain industrial development has produced an intensely exploited proletariat, side by side with general social decomposition (especially an agricultural crisis), have experienced huge social upheavals, drawing in large masses of semi-proletarian strata, and centred on the militant struggle of the young working class of these areas. In recent years, Brazil, Korea and South Africa have experienced social convulsions of this kind, though the main example has been the events in Iran since the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. We can confidently predict that such upheavals will continue, indeed will spread and intensify in the years ahead, due to the economic situation in these areas. (1)

Because the future proletarian revolution must be international in order to succeed, and since the communist party of the working class must be similarly international to lead the struggle for capitalism's overthrow, the problem of the formation of a political vanguard in these areas has to be addressed. The objective situation is that there exists no tradition of the communist left in these countries, and the entire political milieu is dominated by the various brands of leftism ( Maoism, trotskysm etc). In addition, problems of isolation, of repression and of the minority nature of the proletariat, pose enormous problems for the development of any political clarification.

In these given conditions, there are but three options. 1. The formation of a communist vanguard in these areas is irrelevant, since their proletarians are irrelevant to the revolution.

We reject this as a conception verging on chauvinism. Some "internationalists" who write off the workers of two thirds of the globe! And while revolution cannot succeed in any "weak-link" of capitalism taken alone (just as it cannot in any "strong-link" alone either), there is no reason why it cannot start there (as in Russia in 1917). And this seizure of power cannot take place without a communist vanguard.

2. An alternative argument is also used interchangeably by those who wish to wash their hands of the problem. This is to argue that a communist party will emerge spontaneously out of the class struggle in these areas. That is, without any organic contact with the communist left or access to its positions, the proletariat of these areas will create a vanguard directly, which, out of the material of its own existence will formulate a global communist outlook.

Such a view is spontaneism gone mad, and totally alien to Marxist materialism and view of class consciousness. (2)

3. The only alternative perspective is that, under the impact of events, certain currents and individuals will begin to question the basic assumptions of leftism, and embark on a critique of their own positions: of necessity, devoid of contact with left communism, this will take the "scripturalist" road of a "return" to the positions of Lenin and Marx, applied in a mechanical way. However, this offers the possibility of a communist critique, and a further development. It is our revolutionary duty to aid any process of questioning undertaken. Those who retreat into their cosy world of

anathemas, and reject such a course are attempting to conceal their own theoretical poverty and doubts as to their ability to win a polemic.

Thus, when the Iranian Supporters of the Unity of Communist Militants (SUCM) approached the CWO some 18 months ago, sending us outlines of their basic political positions, we knew that our obligation was to engage them in a full and principled political dialogue, in order to win them to the politics of the communist left. Not to denounce them with quotes taken scholastically from texts they no longer adhered to, nor to argue that there were confusions in their formulations. We had to assess in what direction the UCM were travelling: this was unambiguously away from leftism, while carrying much of the vocabulary and categories of leftism along with them. On the basis of their programmatic statements on the class nature of Russia, and of the leftist currents, and of the reactionary role of the national bourgeoisie, it was clear that the possibility existed of the SUCM completing a break with leftism and attaining communist clarity.

### The "Democratic Revolution" and the Iran - Iraq War

Initially relations between our current and the UCM were fairly informal: we published their material on the class struggle in Iran and appeals for solidarity, while they studied our positions, translating several of our texts into Farsi for circulation in Iran (e.g. the text on State Capitalism in RP 19). On certain issues, e.g. the trade unions and the historical experience and analyses of the communist left in Europe, the SUCM swiftly adopted our positions. Relations took a more organised form with the invitation (and acceptance) by the SUCM, to attend the Fourth International Conference of groups of the Communist Left, held in November 1982. The criteria for these conferences were:

1. Recognition of the revolution of October 1917 as proletarian.
2. Recognition of the break with social democracy made in the first two congresses of the 3rd International.
3. Complete rejection of state capitalism and self management.
4. Rejection of all present communist and socialist parties as bourgeois.
5. An orientation towards an organisation of revolutionaries which bases itself on the doctrine and method of Marxism which it recognises as the science of the working class.
6. Rejection of the possibility of subordinating the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie.
7. Recognition of the organising role of the party in the daily struggle of the working class as well as in the revolution itself.

Acceptance of these criteria gave optimistic confirmation of the SUCM's continued evolution towards the communist camp. The full proceedings of the Conference will be published soon, but a summary of the discussion appeared in *Workers Voice* 9. The main area of debate was the question of the "Democratic Revolution", the SUCM arguing that Lenin's theories of 1905 were applicable to Iran in 1983 - a very clear indication of the "scripturalist" tendencies of a current trying to break with leftism without organic contact with the communist left and its analyses of the historical period since 1914. At the conferences, the CWO and our fraternal organisation the P.C.Int (Battaglia) from

Italy polemised against this theory:

"The UCM's programme commits it to fighting for the "Revolutionary Democratic Republic of Workers and Toilers in Iran". ... The idea of such a state and its supposed functions was vigorously attacked by both B.C. and the CWO, but what precisely the UCM comrades meant by this state became less clear as the discussion proceeded. The CWO attacked the idea as being a return to 19th century formulas and a practical rejection of capitalist decadence. It was pointed out that precisely such notions were abandoned by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the April Theses of 1917..... Battaglia (B.C.) pointed out that the transition from bourgeois rule to the dictatorship of the proletariat would necessarily be abrupt and violent. No intermediate state could exist. If such a state did exist it would be of more benefit to the bourgeoisie than to the proletariat. They reminded the SUCM that after the 3rd congress of the Communist International the slogan of Workers' Governments was put forward - a similar intermediate stage - which led to disaster in Germany in 1923 and the tragedy of the Chinese revolution in 1927. The whole concept of a gradual transition from bourgeois rule to workers' dictatorship was outside the communist programme."  
(Workers Voice 9)

Deciding that the theory of the Democratic Revolution was the log-jam preventing further development of the SUCM, we devoted a major text to a critique of the theory which appeared in RP 20, "The Democratic Revolution - A Programme for the East?" Events were soon to reveal that we had hit on the Achilles Heel of the SUCM's errors and gradually the implications of the "democratic revolution" began to be clarified. But even before the appearance of this text, the SUCM began moving backwards, and despite promises, the text remains unanswered by them.

The first issue over which concrete disagreement emerged was the Iran/Iraq war, which broke out in 1980, and which the CWO saw as a crucial event, requiring an international communist response. This we tried to organise via our poster against the war, with which we invited several other groups, including the SUCM to solidarise. The refusal of the SUCM to sign our poster confirmed that they did not have a consistent internationalist position on the war, and this stemmed from their defence of the "democratic revolution" which they felt was going on in Iran. Though changing its content several times, and being nebulously expressed, the central position of the SUCM on the war was that the "main enemy" was US-backed Iraqi "invasion" of Iran, and that the revolution had to be defended against the war. At worst this position was defencism under a radical guise, at best a centrist position, which relegated the war to a minor affair. We published several polemics on the Iran/Iraq war, including the one in Workers Voice 9, "The Iran/Iraq War: A Jihad for Capitalism", where we said,

"However, it seems that the positions of the SUCM on the Iran/Iraq war, without ever implying support for the Islamic Republic, do side-step the issue of revolutionary defeatism. In a polemic on the war they say, 'Communists in Iran must struggle against tendencies which... propagandise exclusively for a war against the present regime, and ignore Iraq's war and the politics served by it.' (The Iran/Iraq War) What else is this but a centrist position which could, under pressure, slide into a "defencist" one? To concentrate on Iraq's role in the war is one-sided and portrays it as the 'greater evil'. And although it may be correct to say that an insurrection is not yet on the agenda in Iran, this does not mean we don't agitate on a revolutionary defeatist basis now. Lenin didn't wait until 1917 to say 'turn your guns on your officers' - he made this demand in 1914, not as an immediate demand, but one of orientation."

But all the prevarications of the SUCM were concretely exposed by their refusal to support our intervention on the war, just as was the Euro-chauvinism of the International Communist Current (ICC) which made a similar refusal. In this issue of RP we are publishing a lucid polemic from our fraternal organisation, the P.C.Int., against the UCM on the Iran/Iraq war, which illustrates both our determination to argue with currents like the SUCM, and our refusal to make any political capitulations in the process.

While the confusions and vacillations of the SUCM on the Iran/Iraq war were serious issues, they were not in themselves conclusive capitulations to the bourgeoisie, any more than is the ICC's proto-pacifism. While the issue remained open, it was our duty to put pressure on the SUCM to change their views. However, relations with the SUCM took a more dramatic turn as the focus of events shifted from the deserts of the Gulf to the mountains of Kurdistan.

## Kurdistan, National Liberation and the United Front

The politics of the UCM provided a reference point for the fragmentation of various political currents in Iran, and the most important of these was the Toilers Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan (Komala). The CWO had no contact with this organisation, or its exiled supporters, though what we saw of their publications indicated that they saw the liberation of the workers in Kurdistan as being a task to be pursued in alliance with the workers of the rest of Iran, rather than in alliance with the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landowners. However, the positions of Komala in general were clearly less advanced than those of the UCM, and we repeatedly pointed out the dangers of a too swift fusion between the currents. But as Khomeini's repression bit, the UCM leadership took refuge in Kurdistan, and became more under Komala's influence, and the possibility of gaining a mass basis. As a result the two currents have recently fused into the 'Communist Party of Iran'. The original positions of the SUCM were that national liberation struggles cannot be successful today, and that the struggle in Kurdistan was "national in form, but proletarian in content", i.e. that the Kurdish workers could only win as part of an Iranian proletarian movement, and not as a Kurdish one in alliance with the Kurdish bourgeoisie. However, fusion with Komala means that the UCM has to take responsibility for the views and actions of the Kurdish organisation. And it is clear that Komala is now, whatever its previous views, waging a "national liberation" struggle in Iranian Kurdistan.

However, despite the idiocies of those like the ICC, who have related to the SUCM in the most sectarian and chauvinistic manner, this in itself is not a sufficient reason to denounce the UCM or Komala as "bourgeois". It is truly ironical that the ICC should argue otherwise, when it was the ICC which was instrumental (quite rightly!) in rejecting opposition to national liberation as a criteria for attendance at the International Conferences, and substituting for it "rejection of subordination of the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie" (see Proceedings of the International Conferences - Volume 11, pages 41-2), which is the real issue. But the ICC's motives here were marxist in form, but opportunist in content, since the aim was to gain adherence to future meetings of their satraps Nucleo Communista, a bordigist group with which the ICC manoeuvred opportunistically against the P.C.Int. Now their motives are equally opportunistic, to discredit the CWO and P.C.Int. by lies and slanders, and even if the cost is a Euro-chauvinist theory, so what? When it was pointed out to the ICC that they 'forgot' Nucleo's support for national liberation, they retorted this didn't matter, since Nucleo were 'Europeans' and not actually involved in national liberation, they only supported it 'theoretically'. On recovering our breath at this rampant chauvinism, we pointed out that Programma (PCI) had supported Algerian liberation and had members in Algeria. This was also different, they declared, since Programma is a proletarian group. Such an attitude implies that groups moving away from communism can call out Victory

to the PLO! and still be communist, while a group like the SUCM, moving towards communist positions, and which rejected bourgeois liberation movements, is condemned a priori!

The crucial factor is clearly not whether an organisation has confusions on the national question, or whether they are "non-Europeans", but whether they engage in a political united front with "their own" bourgeoisie. The lessons of the events of Germany in 1923 and China in 1927 are crucial in this respect, leading to ideological disorientation and physical massacre of the workers.

It is with this criteria that we approach the situation in Kurdistan. The emergence of Komala as a force undoubtedly led to a new factor in the Kurdish situation. Despite the rantings of those who said Komala was bourgeois because it had a radio station, the emergence, however confused of a group attacking Russia and the Tudeh as bourgeois, as well as the Islamic Republic, and arguing that the class struggle against the bourgeois Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) had to be intensified, created the basis for future progress. However, as Khomeini's assault on the virtual "secession" which had taken place in Kurdistan intensified, so too did pressure on Komala. In a desperate military situation there were two options: either an alliance with the bourgeois forces of the KDP or an extension of the class struggle in the rest of the Iranian proletariat. However, instead of arguing for the latter course, the UCM has capitulated to the backward elements in Komala who have forced the adoption of the former.

## Komala and the K.D.P.

It is clear that since the latest offensive, started by Khomeini's Pasardan thugs, Komala and the KDP have adopted a united front on the social, military and political levels. According to the bourgeois International Solidarity Front for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Iran (News Bulletin 4 August/September 1983),

"The offensive of last autumn also forced the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Komala - the two main guerrilla organisations - to join forces against the regime and resolve many of their differences."

When the CWO asked the SUCM for information on Kurdistan we were told that the only links Komala had with the KDP were "humanitarian", exchanges of prisoners, etc. Possibly they lacked information, though some SUCM members had their doubts about Komala's positions. But any doubts were dispelled when Youssef Ardalan, the representative of Komala abroad, gave an interview to the leftist Kurdistan News and Comment, along the following lines, when asked about relations with the KDP:

"Regardless of our differences with KDP, we always insist in uniting our actions against the Islamic regime in order to escalate the Revolution. In the social or educational fields, the customs (the Peshmergas control the Iraqi border - note from K.N.a.C.) the welfare of the people, in the field of hygiene we have tried to co-operate with the KDP -I, but our offers have been put down. But nevertheless in the field of the military offensives, we have had some joint operations."

In other words the initial rejection of a united front came from the KDP, NOT Komala. Let us recall that the KDP is the party of the Kurdish landlords and bourgeoisie with a long history as an agent of imperialist interests, from Barzani's Mahabad Republic to the present, when it is supported by the Baathist regime in Iraq ("maybe" was Ardalan's answer to this point), and is a member of the bourgeois Behi-Sadr Council for Resistance against Khomeini. And Komala proposes to liberate the Kurdish workers by an alliance with such a force! On June 5th this year the KDP and Komala issued a joint statement calling for a national shut-down in Kurdistan to protest against Khomeini's crimes, addressed to the "people" including the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, showing

how the class perspective is being lost,

"We request the people to close down all offices, schools, markets, shops, firms and workshops."

The original perspective of a struggle national in form and proletarian in content has been replaced by one national in form and bourgeois in content. Clearly, however, all has not gone well with the KDP - Komala union, and clashes between their rival armed followers have occurred, including one on August 2nd at Sardasht. The KDP/Komala issued a joint statement regretting the incident and insisting that the united front was the way to victory:

"the cooperation between Komala and KDPI in order to escalate and lead the Kurdish Peoples Revolutionary Movement to victory." (Communique No 30 of Komala Abroad 9th August 1983)

In agreeing to discipline and punish those responsible for the incident Komala showed that it has become a means for the KDP to control the more militant elements in the Kurdish arena.

While Saddam Hussein aids the KDPI, the tragedy of the Kurdish masses is also played out on the other side of the border. There the Iraqi KDP has welcomed Khomeini's offensive into Iraqi Kurdistan and its forces are fighting alongside the Pasardan, which is massacring Iran's Kurds. This manipulation of the Kurdish masses by the Kurdish nationalist bourgeoisie is no new phenomenon, paralleling the situation in Kurdistan prior to the Algiers Agreement in 1975 between the Shah and Saddam Hussein.

## The U.C.M. and Komala

What has been the response of the SUCM to the united front of Komala with the KDP? - A staggering silence. One searches the pages of their paper Bolshevik Message for any reference to the KDP, or the materials we have cited above. To the last the CWC acted according to its obligations and we wrote to the SUCM on the 20th August 1983 asking for a clarification of their attitude to the materials we had in our possession on links with the KDP. The SUCM replied thus,

"You refuse the permissibility of joint action with other political currents in the practical struggle, in the name of rejecting united fronts. You say that one loses one's independence by taking part in joint actions with other non-proletarian forces for reaching specific aims, and in horror, quote from the "Kurdistan: News and Comment" about our joint actions with other parties such as the KDP in educational, military, medical etc fields."

In other words, not only are the fronts not denied, but the critique of the united front policy, which the SUCM had previously accepted, is thrown overboard. What our comrades in Italy said in May 1983 (see WV 13, "Political Forces in Kurdistan") has proved correct: fusing with Komala has not lead to the latter attaining the advances made by the UCM, but has dragged the UCM back to the positions of Komala. And let us be clear what this implies: since fusion the UCM takes responsibility for Komala's actions, and the latter is in a united front with the KDP which is a leading element in the bourgeois democratic opposition to Khomeini led by Bani-Sadr, and including the Mujahadeen (and doubtless soon the Tudeh as well). Objectively the UCM has allied itself with the bourgeois opposition to Khomeini. This opposition still has a foot in both imperialist camps, just as do the regimes of both Tehran and Baghdad; but eventually the manoeuvrings will be transferred into open imperialist alignments.

Whatever way events develop the fruits of opportunism will not be victory for the proletariat. If Khomeini moves back into the western camp, the Council of National Resistance could become more pro-Soviet, and Komala will find itself fighting for Russian imperialism. If Khomeini does a deal with the KDP, the latter will massacre Komala as its price for administering 'its' part of Iranian capitalism.

# 2. The Iran-Iraq War

## In Conclusion

In *Bolshevik Message 6*, an interview with a leading UCM member states, absolutely correctly,

"(international communists), If they see any mistakes in our movement should criticise these explicitly. But they should not just say what must not be done, but should also try to tell us what must be done."

To criticise what the UCM did in Iran is easy - to elaborate what communists should have done is difficult, but essential. What alternative did we have but to ally with the KDP when Khomeini's wolves were at the door, the UCM will say. Unfortunately, the UCM's own theoretical perspective robbed them of an alternative. The issue round which to agitate, and which could have "stayed the hand" of Khomeini, was the Iran/Iraq war. By engaging in a consistent, defeatist policy towards the war, and using it as a means to agitate amongst the Iranian masses, the social disintegration of the regime, and basis for a revival of the class struggle could have been hastened. Instead, imprisoned by their conception of a "democratic revolution" independent of the Khomeini regime, which had to be 'defended', the UCM relegated the central issue in Iran since 1979, to a peripheral one and struck the weapon from their own hands. Once embarked on this course the "democratic revolution" became elastic enough to accommodate a united front with the bourgeois KDP. While the UCM is wrong in thinking that Lenin's ideas of 1905 are applicable in 1983, it should be pointed out that they now travesty his ideas of the democratic revolution. Lenin never argued that a "democratic revolution" made defensibility possible (e.g. he did not say that Russia was "defensible" against Japan after 1905), nor did he imply as did the Mensheviks that any political united front with the bourgeoisie could achieve this revolution, but only total political opposition to it. The UCM's invention of a progressive role for the KDP is regression to the Menshevik view of the democratic revolution.

The attempt to influence the UCM in a positive direction had undergone a decisive set-back. However, our perspectives towards them was correct, and in the event of similar currents appearing (e.g. in Brazil, Turkey etc) we would relate to them similarly. Let the latter-day Culdees retreat into anathemas; we intend to influence events, not simply retreat into chauvinism under the guise of principle. Even despite the trajectory of the UCM, the debate with them has deepened our understanding of the question of the democratic revolution and that of revolutionary defeatism. Our material has circulated both inside Iran and in the milieu in exile, and we will soon publish our texts in Farsi. This effort will bear fruit in the future.

As regards the UCM and Komala, their support for the "democratic revolution" is leading to support for the "democratic" camp of Iranian capitalism. The continuation of this policy will mean that the UCM will be an obstacle to the formation of a communist minority in Iran, which will have to be built in a struggle against it.

- (1) See the "Perspectives" article in this issue.
- (2) For elaboration, see article "Class Consciousness in the Marxist Perspective" in this issue.

## Forthcoming C.W.O. Pamphlet in Farsi

### THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION, A PROGRAMME FOR THE PAST?

To be published in the Spring  
at 50p.(p.p.); orders to group  
address.

## Letter from the Internationalist Communist Party (B.C.) to the S.U.C.M.

Dear Comrades,

Our apologies for the long delay in sending the promised documents in reply to your texts. The delay is partly due to the many tasks our weak forces have to carry out, and partly because we wanted to read and study all the documents you have sent.

There are many points to discuss. Here we will take up the most important ones and only make some brief comments on the others.

Let's begin with one of the last texts received - "Marxist Theory of Crisis" - because, as you rightly said, it is of fundamental importance. Throughout the text there recurs a rather dangerous view of the crisis which loses sight of a central conclusion to the Marxist theory of crisis in the imperialist epoch. If it is true in fact that "the crisis itself acts as a practical mechanism for its own alleviation" (p.10) in the sense that its most immediate effects act as alleviating factors, it's still not true that it is "the process which creates favourable conditions for a new cycle of capital accumulation" (p.10). This over-estimates the possibility of conserving the capitalist mode of production. An example of this is found when the text examines the appropriation of the means of production in the weakest capitalist sectors (p.11). Such appropriation leads to a major centralisation of capital without a proportional increase in capital. That is, in theory, the surplus value produced - because it is appropriated from a capital with a lower total value - leads to a relative increase in the rate of profit. But reality is different. In fact, appropriations of bankrupt capitals aren't immediately followed by such an increase because plants must be re-structured, improved, i.e. made efficient again, and of course enlarged. The tendency towards restructuring which is typical of, and particularly acute in, this period (we have been writing about it for years) therefore means that the major centralisations also involve an increase in capital. If restructuring hadn't been indispensable the old property wouldn't have failed. As a consequence of this the phenomenon which is given so much importance in the text is of such a brief duration that there are no positive effects on the  $\frac{s}{c+v}$  fraction.

Hypothetically, then, the raising of the rate of profit in the case of a major drop in  $c$  (and therefore in  $c+v$ ) in relation to  $s$  is true. But its limited nature does not resolve the problem of the general raising of  $c$  (or rather of the fall in the rate of profit). Thus, the other example given doesn't hold and is false: i.e. it's not true that the strongest take the markets of the weakest who fail (to survive), and by increasing the scale of their production via technological innovation, save themselves. Closures on the one hand, and re-structurings on the other influence the question and therefore affect the market. They are therefore an important aspect, but of a more limited market. This is a general feature of the economies of the advanced countries. It is the problem that political economy in every state is unable to solve.

And the basic error is on page 12:

"... firstly, by intensifying competition, the crisis provides the necessary groundwork for the internal purging and re-organisation of capital and thus for the increase in its profitability and, secondly, since capital emerges out of every crisis more centralised the next crisis appears with greater and deeper dimensions, causes more intensified

competition and its alleviation necessitates a more all-sided reconstruction for capital. Thus, with every crisis, capital comes one step nearer to its disintegration."

Here, it seems to us, the focal point of the error is clear. The preceding examples about the crisis providing the means for overcoming itself fit perfectly the conjunctural crises of (individual) sectors (the closure of the weakest plants, the appropriation of the market by the strongest capitals, etc.). In this sense the conclusion is correct only if in place of "disintegration" we put the structural crisis of capital which develops from the successive sectoral or "conjunctural" crises.

If this is not the case, we can sit down and quietly wait for the final crisis and the disintegration of the capitalist mode of production - while capital itself resolves the crisis on its terrain by war! There are no economic means or mechanisms for resolving the structural crisis of capitalism. Capitalism in crisis resorts to extra-economic means; it resorts to the destruction of the means and forces of production, because only these lead to new conditions for a new accumulation cycle. The 1st and 2nd World Wars signalled at the same time the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. We are now at the close of a third cycle and Lenin's alternative of imperialist war or proletarian revolution is being posed once again. Today capital can only resolve the fall in  $\frac{s}{c+v}$  by eliminating huge

amounts of c (destruction of factories, infrastructure, cities) and huge quantities of v (slaughter of humans). In our view it is rather serious for a Marxist text on the crisis to ignore this fundamental element in the life of monopoly capitalism (imperialism) - i.e. to ignore the question of war. Thus the pamphlet is marred by a certain scholasticism and readiness to omit the facts of the real world.

In this respect, the text's overestimation of the proletariat's economic struggle is significant. A successful economic struggle would allow the re-employment of workers at lower wage levels. It is true that wage levels are falling - but, as you well know comrades - living as you do in England - this is not accompanied by re-employment. It is not by lowering wages that capital finds a solution to the crisis. Rather, it is the case that lowering of wages, the worsening of workers' living standards, are indispensable for capital's survival until the moment when its real solution breaks out - war.

Such a unilinear and incomplete analysis of the crisis leads to a serious political distortion. The text argues:

"...either the proletariat (...wins) or the struggle is confined to the economic level and the bourgeoisie becomes victorious in its assault on the level of subsistence of the working class, exploitation intensifies, and the necessary conditions for the commencement of a new cycle of capital accumulation are created for the bourgeoisie." (ppl3-14)

No, comrades. The "economic" defeat of the proletariat isn't by itself sufficient to recreate the conditions for a new cycle. If such were the case it would be enough to push the unions into making it their task to work for the revolution - by communists working inside the unions, as in the classical and by now obsolete vision of the 3rd International. Thus, if it's true that it is indispensable for the bourgeoisie to attack the proletariat, this alone is not sufficient for it. And it is not the case that "in the final analysis the incapacity of the union movement lies in this truth" - i.e. that the trade unions' acceptance of compromise leads to the recreation of better conditions for capital. This is what the trade unionists say and would have us believe. But in reality the unions are no longer the expressions of the economic defence of the proletariat; they are also anti-working class on

the economic terrain. You know our positions on this but it doesn't seem to us that the view of the trade union movement in Hekmat's text coincides with these. It seems to us that the text presents an essentially optimistic (or propagandist) view of the crisis which would bring the proletariat into action, reinforcing itself and the party, crisis by crisis, until the revolution. Here there's no view of the relationship between crisis - war - reconstruction. Through war (if it succeeds) the bourgeoisie creates new conditions for the accumulation cycle whose ascendant phase destroys, as it has destroyed, the communist vanguard. The 1st World War and the immediate post-war crisis opened up great possibilities which found their first expression in the Bolshevik October. But the failure of the revolution in Europe and its retreat in Russia opened the door to an unprecedented wave of counter-revolution. This also led to a definitive change in relations between party and class in the European countries, in the sense that the ambiguous myth of the mass communist party was liquidated for ever. At the height of the counter-revolutionary wave of the Thirties the 2nd World War, up until its end, reopened some limited opportunities which our party tried to use to gain a foothold against the bourgeoisie's restructuring under the shadow of Truman and Stalin. Again "restructuration" won, leaving us weakened numerically and isolated from the working masses. Now new perspectives are opening up. But, knowing what the bourgeoisie is preparing, it's necessary to examine them clearly so as to be able to put up a fight, since the bourgeoisie is preparing for war because it has no other solution. We are in complete agreement with the description of the dependent capitalist market. But even within this specific analysis of the problems and capitalist ties in the dominated countries we find a mirror-image of the error on the unions in the dominant countries. There is a tendency to consider the proletariat of the capital exporting countries as a workers' aristocracy in the confrontations of the world proletariat. While this can be admitted in one sense, it is still dangerous and rather misses the point. In fact, from this idea the text somewhat mechanically reaches an incorrect assessment of Euro-communism which is seen by Hekmat as the "reappearance of social chauvinism in the name of Euro-communism in the workers' movement of the metropolitan countries". No, comrades. The rise of Euro-communism coincides with the fall in support for the "communist" parties by the workers. This confirms our thesis that the P.C.I. (Communist Party of Italy) et. al. are not expressions of the aristocracy of labour, but of the left wing of the bourgeoisie. In other words, it is not that the working class, corrupted by imperialist super profits, expresses its "bourgeois" being through Euro-communist theories and parties. It is rather that the Western bourgeoisie, powerful as a result of its real domination over society (see The German Ideology) gives rise to currents and parties which are capable of confining the working class for some time and to a large extent, while preparing the ideological framework in which to quieten the workers and maintain their passivity.

But with the crisis, with the substitution of material pressures for the tranquil continuity of democratic relations, workers' disposition to stay inside this frame-work begins to decline. There is total passivity but, for example, Euro-communism grows outside of the mass of workers - amongst technicians and shopkeepers, managers and bureaucrats, but not in the factories.

We turn to another theme: that of the movement of different spheres of capital under the domination of monopoly capital (p.56 ff). The way Hekmat deals with this (and we are glad to say we are in agreement) does not at all exclude the possibility of ruthless competition amongst neighbouring states, for example, over the possession and exploitation of oil.

Well, comrades, it's really here that the main reason for the Iran-Iraq war is to be found. However, this argument is unfortunately allowed to drop. We'll therefore pass on to the pamphlet which you dedicate to

# THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR A JIHAD FOR CAPITALISM

جنگ ایران و عراق  
جهاد برای کپیتالیسم



"A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot help wishing the defeat of its own government."  
(Lenin)

For two and a half years Iran and Iraq have been at war in the Persian Gulf. Thousands of workers are being murdered in the interests of capitalism. Communists must take a clear revolutionary stand against the war.

The root cause of the war is the world economic crisis of capitalism. Both Iran and Iraq are sinking into economic chaos with inflation and unemployment at massive levels. Their rulers see the Gulf oil fields as essential to their survival. The bourgeoisie of both countries also see the war as a way of deflecting working class discontent into a patriotic frenzy.

Both Iran and Iraq claim to be "anti-imperialist", but both imperialist blocs, the USA and the USSR, have intervened in the war by arming and giving loans to both sides, and both are trying to use the war as a way of establishing control of this area. "Anti-imperialism" unless it is also anti-capitalism is simply nationalism in disguise.

However, despite mass executions of workers and communists in Iran and Iraq this war has been opposed. Thousands have deserted the armies of Khomeini and Saddam Hussein, or have been exiled for refusal to fight. Workers in both countries have struck against wage cuts and tax rises to finance the war. In Sulaymaniyah strikers chanted "neither Saddam nor Khomeini". Communists in Iran and Iraq have opposed the chauvinism of the official "Communist" Parties and leftist groups, and called on workers to carry on their fight for their own interests in opposition to the war.

#### WORKERS, COMRADES

- + No support for the "anti-imperialist" lies of the Iraqi Ba'athists or the Islamic Republic. Both are equally anti working class.
- + No to any sacrifices to pay for the war! No to taxes or wage cuts. Link the struggle against the crisis to the struggle against the war.
- + Resolute defence of proletarian organisation. Mobilisation against any emergency decrees, e.g. curfews, bans on press, assembly etc.
- + Carry the fight into the armies. For agitation amongst the soldiers in order to paralyse the military machine.

Capitalism in crisis offers us only war or revolution. The tasks of communists in Iran and Iraq today are the tasks of communists everywhere tomorrow: to turn the bourgeois war into a civil war for the overthrow of capitalism and the end of all wars.

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this problem, "The Invasion of the Iraqi Regime and our Tasks", starting from this premise:

"The competition of the different capitals is the substratum for the approximation of the profitability of the different capitals to the average level of the rate of profit..."

In the work cited all the premises (pp 1 and 2) are true, except point b. That is, it's not true that the economic and political questions of that region (or of any other) develop according to the relations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. At least, not in the sense that is meant in the text.

It isn't through war that one bourgeoisie helps another bourgeoisie which is afflicted by revolutionary movements, and until it can be proved otherwise, the bourgeoisie is still firmly in power in Iran. The Paris Commune is the first big example of how the bourgeoisie behaves when revolution threatens one of its fronts - the Prussians ceased their attack while the Versailles annihilated the Communards.

Russia is a second great example. The Entente intervened, but the power they were attacking was the proletariat: it really was a revolutionary power. But Khomeini? In fact the clash of interests, the contradictions which are influencing bourgeois politics at the moment, are inter-bourgeois and therefore inter-imperialist interests and contradictions.

Here we must mention another essential premise for the UCM: that the revolution in Iran is still going on. But if this was so, comrades, the general interests of the bourgeoisie, both Iranian and Iraqi, would be for internal peace in order to make common war against the proletariat. The Prussian guns fell silent; the troops ceased fire in order to help the Versailles! The reality is that for the time being the Iranian proletariat has been brought to a halt and is madly throwing itself against the Iraqis under the banner of Islam. Certainly, the Iranian and Iraqi bourgeoisies are profiting from this and avoiding the danger of a new revolutionary wave, indeed this aim 'controls' their internal problems. If it is true, as the document states further on, that the overthrow of the Shah's regime heralded great social tumult, it's no less true that the first stirrings were followed by a temporary, but very real readjusting of an unstable equilibrium based on the weakness of the working class. And for the moment instability has led to the inter-bourgeois struggle which is in the limelight today in Iran.

So, then, it's not true that the war is a new way for US imperialism to carry out its attacks against the Iranian proletariat; but it is true that war is a new form of competition between national capitals, behind whose interests the great imperialist powers are acting. The UCM underestimates the internal clash of interests between the imperialist fronts in the region and overestimates the exclusive domination of the US.

First of all, the UCM identifies the general tasks of the Iraqi state as being those of a direct agent of US imperialism. This is not the case. Let us explain further. The policies and tasks of any state and regime must be to assure class domination over society. In the imperialist period, that is in the stage of the capitalist system where this determines the market at an international level, where imperialism penetrates the most isolated regions and exports its laws and its contradictions, the task of states becomes that of representing and defending the interests of the dominating class in every country from within the economic relations which imperialism imposes on a world scale. It's on this world stage of anarchic capitalist interests that every state must defend the interests and survival of the dominant class which it represents.

Only in this sense can the apparent paradox be explained of states where a historical bourgeoisie is absent and which lack such a self-development of the bourgeoisie

and capitalist relations (in the sense that these have been imposed on such countries by international imperialist capitalism) yet where - and really because of this - the dominant classes and their state operate on the terrain of international bourgeois capital. It is easy to state how the penetration of imperialist capitalism is more recent (in such areas), how much more restricted and unilateral are the relations of dependence between a particular state and one of the imperialist fronts (or its centre).

Thus, while the Baathist Iraqi regime defends (of course by attacking others) the particular interests of 'Iraqi' capital, it also defends the interests of these international centres with which its existence as capital is bound up. This is so, despite all the contradictions which this intertwining implies for the line-up of international capital and for its various diplomatic, political and military oscillations. Also, comrades, the Soviet Union with whom Iraq has open relations, is part of this same network.

Can the war lead to increased repression and the re-establishment of a balance of power in favour of US imperialism (as stated on p.4)? Yes, it can. But this does not at all mean that the possible consequences are the cause of the war. As you can see, our differences on the Iran-Iraq war are not secondary because they are related to (different) analytical premises. It is from such mistaken premises that the UCM's underestimation of revolutionary defeatism springs, as well as the fact that on revolutionary defeatism the UCM has only conducted the critique against Peykar.

Obviously revolutionary defeatism doesn't simply imply the simple predicate "insurrection now". But it is essential not to overestimate the "gains of the revolution" and not to neglect to denounce the real reasons for, as well as the consequences of, the war.

We also want to say something about the pamphlet which criticises Peykar (of whom we know very little and certainly do not intend to defend!). On page 9 there is a serious mistake which is a consequence of the premise already examined. It is an error which can be considered as one of the theoretical starting points of social chauvinism.

The extent of dependence of a specific country on this or that imperialist bloc depends only on the intrinsic economic capacity of that country. This is very obvious in the case of the European countries, or of Japan or China. The extent of dependence is in inverse proportion to the strength of bourgeois nationalism in the context of the world capitalist class. An association of gangsters has its hierarchy with a corresponding level of major or minor dependence for everyone of its ranks.

And the specific strength of each bourgeoisie is linked to its productive capacity and its actual productivity; to its direct access to raw materials; to its "capacity" therefore, for self-sufficiency and to its ability to penetrate international markets. It is thus that Japan, even though short of raw materials, but rich in industrial and technological resources, was able to raise itself to the level of intermediate dependence and subjugation to American capital with its exit from the Second World War. To affirm what the UCM affirms on pp 8-9 of the document is to say that an anti-imperialist struggle of the proletariat, even if not definitively victorious, makes a country less dependent on the imperialist states. This, comrades, leads you into justifying what you don't want to justify: support, either direct or indirect, for Khomeini - seen as the temporary product of the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses. And this, therefore, is the error which lies at the bottom of your hypothesis about the victory of the Revolutionary Democratic Republic, to which we will turn.

Page 11 reintroduces a concept which has already appeared elsewhere: that of the division of the world out of world war. This appears to us to be the "absolutising" this fact and, mistakenly says that only